DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 085 SO 012 033

AUTHOR O'Connell, Agnes N.
TITLE Is Life-Style Related to Personality, Role Concept, and the Influence of Significant Others?
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (15th, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Characteristics; Changing Attitudes; *Females; Identification (Psychological); *Life Style; *Personality; Psychological Evaluation; Psychological Patterns; Role Models; *Role Perception; Self Concept; Sex Role; *Social Influences

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the relationship between life-style, personality, role concept, and the influence of significant others in married women pursuing traditional, neotraditional, and nontraditional life-styles. Traditional women are defined as those who left paid employment after marriage or the birth of their first child; neotraditional women as those who returned to paid employment after a period of childrearing; and nontraditional women as those who simulataneously combined a career with marriage and childrearing. It was hypothesized that in comparison with traditional women, neotraditional and nontraditional women: 1) are more dominant, ambitious, achievement-oriented, and intellectual; 2) have broader role concepts, and 3) have husbands and parents with more liberal attitudes and life-styles. Inventories used to measure traits of the 87 subjects (all middle-class, college graduates, wives and mothers between the ages of 30 and 58), included the California Psychological Inventory, Inventory of Women's Life-Styles, and Inventory of Women's Role Concept and Attitudes. Statistical analysis of the inventories indicated that there are separate personality patterns, role perceptions, and perceptions of influences of husbands and parents for the three life-styles. The conclusion is that traditional, neotraditional, and nontraditional patterns seem to be compatible with, and reflective of, the life-styles chosen by the women. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED177085

SEP 25 1979

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Agnes N. O'Connell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Is Life-Style Related to Personality, Role Concept, and the Influence of Significant Others?

Agnes N. O'Connell

Montclair State College

Abstract

Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional women differ significantly in personality; role concepts; parents' life-style; perceptions of husbands' preferred life-styles and attitudes toward male/female roles; husbands' education; and family size. Influence of parents' life-style contributes .64 of the variance to the daughter's choice of life-style.

SP 012 033

Is Life-Style Related to Personality, Role Concept, and the Influence of Significant Others?[1]

Agnes N. O'Connell
Montclair State College

Purpose

It is the purpose of this study to examine the relationship between life-style and (a) personality, (b) role concept, and (c) the influence of significant others in married women pursuing three different life-styles: Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional (see Subjects) (Ginzberg, 1966; Cooper, 1963).

The hypotheses are: a) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have personalities which are more dominant (Dominance), ambitious (Capacity for Status), self-confident (Self-Acceptance), achievement-oriented (Achievement via Conformance and Achievement via Independence), intellectual (Intellectual Efficiency), and self-actualizing (Psychological-Mindedness) than Traditional women; b) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have broader role concepts than Traditional women; c) the significant others (parents and husbands) of Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have more liberal attitudes and life-style preferences than those of Traditional women; d) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women differ significantly from each other in personality, role concept, and significant others; and e) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have smaller families and better educated husbands than Traditional women.

Subjects

Subjects were 87 middle-class, college-graduated women, wives and mothers, between the ages of 30 and 58 years (mean age = 39.4 years). Life-style category

---

[1] Paper presented at the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Philadelphia, April 1979.

was based on career-home commitment. Traditional women (N = 24) left paid employment (terminated) after marriage or the birth of their first child, were full-time homemakers and intended to remain so; Neotraditional women (N = 40) returned to paid employment (interrupted) after a period of childrearing; and Nontraditional women (N = 23) simultaneously combined a career (continuous) with marriage and childrearing (Ginzberg, 1966; Cooper, 1963). Various age groups (F (2, 84) = 1.612, ns) and religious preferences (X^2 (4) = 0.103, ns) were similarly represented in each life-style.

Procedure

The California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1956) was used to measure personality. Modified versions of the Inventory of Women's Life-Styles (Ginzberg, 1966) and the Inventory of Women's Role Concept and Attitudes (O'Connell, 1974) measured life-style, role concept, attitudes, and the influence of significant others. All inventories were completed anonymously. Open-ended items were scored by the author and another rater (scorer agreement was 91%; rescore reliability, 94%; ambiguous items were scored jointly).

Results

The CPI means shown in Table 1 indicate three separate personality patterns for the three different life-styles and a significant relationship between life-styles and personality. Nontraditional women score significantly higher than Traditional women in Dominance, Capacity for Status, Self-Acceptance, Achievement via Conformance, Intellectual Efficiency, and Psychological-Mindedness as hypothesized and also in Sociability and Social Presence. Neotraditional women score significantly higher than Traditional women in Dominance, Self-Acceptance, Achievement via Conformance, and Psychological-Mindedness as hypothesized and in Sociability. Neotraditional women are not significantly higher than Traditional

women in Capacity for Status or Intellectual Efficiency. Nontraditional women score significantly higher than Neotraditional women in Dominance, Achievement via Conformance, and Social Presence. All life-styles score similarly in Achievement via Independence.

Women pursuing different life-styles perceive the female role in significantly ($X^2 = 17.83$, $p < .001$) different ways. Nontraditional (91.3%) and Neotraditional (60%) women are significantly more likely than Traditional women (30.4%) to perceive women's role as involving either simultaneous career and family commitments or a role specifically designed to accommodate the individual women. Equal proportions (34.8% and 34.8%, respectively) of Traditional women perceive woman's role as focused on marriage, home, volunteer work or as involving a return to a career after childrearing. Significantly ($X^2 = 5.56$, $p < .01$) more Neotraditional women (40%) than Nontraditional women (8.7%) perceive the female role as involving a hiatus in career involvement for a period of childrearing.

Traditional (70.8%) women are significantly ($X^2 = 7.78$, $p < .05$) more likely to have three or more children than Neotraditional (47.5%) or Nontraditional (30.4%) women. Nontraditional (82.6%) and Neotraditional (70%) women are more likely ($X^2 = 13.7$, $p < .001$) than Traditional women (33.3%) to be married to men whose formal education exceeded a college degree.

Traditional (66.7%) and Neotraditional (65%) women are significantly ($X^2 = 6.6$, $p < .05$) more likely to perceive their husbands as favoring a life-style with a clear division, or a minor overlap, of duties and responsibilities for husbands and wives than are Nontraditional women (34.8%). Nontraditional women (65.2%) are more likely to perceive their husbands as favoring a life-style with little distinction between duties and responsibilities for husbands and wives. Traditional women (50%) are significantly ($X^2 = 31.9$, $p < .001$)

more likely to perceive their husbands as having attitudes which polarize male/female roles than Neotraditional (7.5%) or Nontraditional (4.3%) women. Neotraditional (57.5%) women perceive their husbands as favoring some flexibility in male/female roles; Nontraditional women (69.6%) perceive their husbands as significantly more likely to view male/female roles in egalitarian terms or based on individual preferences than Traditional (12.5%) or Neotraditional (35%) women do.

Traditional women (69.6%) are more likely ($X^2 = 6.54$, $p < .05$) to have had mothers who were homemakers while Neotraditional (63.9%) and Nontraditional (57.1%) women are more likely to have had mothers who were employed as well.

The influence of parents' life-style had a dramatic effect on daughter's choice of life-style. Traditional (78.3%), Neotraditional (78.4%), and Nontraditional (90.9%) women report parental influence in the direction of their present life-style in response to the question, "In what way did your parents' life circumstances (such as occupation, education, social position, finances, health, divorce, etc.) affect your educational, occupational or other decisions or goals?" The responses indicate that if the daughter perceives the parents' life-style positively then the influence is toward the same life-style for herself; if, however, the daughter perceives the parents' life-style as unrewarding then her choice is a reaction away from such a life-style. Additional analysis (multiple regression and partial correlations) of the data indicates that the "influence of parents' life-style" accounts for a dramatic .64 ($r = .80$) of the variance in the daughter's choice of life-style (see Table 2). However, "influence of parents' life-style" may not be independent of daughter's present life-style and although intriguing this finding should be viewed with caution.

As shown in Table 2 personality, role concept, and husband's influence are significantly correlated with life-style. However, only husband's educational level and his preferred life-style approach significance when "influence of parents' life-style" is controlled.

Conclusions

This study indicates that there is a very definite relationship between life-style, personality, role concept and the influence of significant others. The most meaningful of these relationships seems to be the influence of parents' life-style on the daughter's life-style. The data on parents' life-style indicates a strong modeling effect but also indicates that other dynamics may be operating. A daughter's choice of a life-style different from that of her parents might be a reaction away from her parents' example and influences both when she chooses a more, or less, restrictive life-style for herself. It might be a self-reported behavioral statement relating to the inappropriateness of her parents' life-style for herself. Or perhaps a different choice is a response to the present range of alternative life-styles, a desire for personal fulfillment, and encouragement toward such a life-style by significant others. Women today may be reaping the rewards of a happy match between opportunities, propensities, and personalities.

The data does distinguish three separate personality patterns for Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional women. Nontraditional women are more dominant, ambitious, self-confident, achievement-oriented, intellectual, self-actualizing, and socially poised than Traditional women and more dominant, achievement-oriented, and socially poised than Neotraditional women. Neotraditional women are more dominant, self-confident, achievement-oriented, self-actualizing, and socially poised than Traditional women. These three patterns

seem to be compatible with, and reflective of, the life-styles chosen by the women.

The data also indicate that women pursuing different life-styles perceive the female role in significantly different ways and that Traditional and Neo-traditional women's concepts of the female role are generally less restrictive than the life-styles they pursue. For these women, there seems to be at least attitudinal acceptance of a female role involving greater latitude and diversity. This movement is also seen in the women's perceptions of their husbands' attitudes on male/female roles. The concepts the women in this study hold of the female role and their perceptions of their husbands' attitudes are consistent. For Nontraditional women, the responses indicate that they choose (or are chosen by) husbands who are (or have become) well-educated professionals or executives, husbands who not only approve of their wives' careers but who share with them an egalitarian view towards woman's role and a preference for an egalitarian life-style.

The present study extends the findings of other researchers on the relationship between mothers' employment and career salience in married women (e.g., Bielby, 1978) and the findings on the relationship between life-style and personality, role concept, size of family, husband's education, and attitudes of significant others (e.g., Clarkson, Vogel, Broverman & Broverman, 1970; Farley, 1970; Gysbers, Johnston, & Gust, 1968; O'Connell, 1977; Weil, 1961). But perhaps, most importantly, this study points to the tremendous impact of the influence of parental life-style on the choice of life-style for the women in this sample.

In sum then, this study indicates that a woman's personality, role concept, parental life-style and influence, perception of husband's life-style preference and attitudes are significantly related to her own life-style. These data

bring us one step closer to answering the question, "Why does one married woman choose a Traditional life-style, another a Neotraditional, and a third a Non-traditional life-style?" Although other factors are involved, the answer seems related to a woman's personality and identifications, her socialization, and her structuring of reality.

References

Bielby, D.D. Maternal employment and socioeconomic status as factors in daughter's career salience: Some substantive refinements. Sex Roles, 1978, 4 (2), 249-265.

Clarkson, F.E., Vogel, S.R., Broverman, I.K., & Broverman, D.M. Family size and sex-role stereotypes. Science, 1970, 167 (391[illegible]), 390-392.

Cooper, S. Career patterns of women. Vocational Rehabilitation and Education Quarterly, 1963, 6-28.

Farley, J. Graduate women: Career aspirations and desired family size. American Psychologist, 1970, 25 (12), 1099-1100.

Ginzberg, E. & Associates. Life-styles of educated women. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Gough, H. G. California Psychological Inventory. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1956.

Gysbers, M. C., Johnston, J. A. & Gust, T. Characteristics of homemaker and career-oriented women. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1968, 15 541-546.

Kagan, J. The concept of identification. Psychological Review, 1958, 65, 296-305.

O'Connell, A. N. Determinants of women's life-styles and sense of identity: Personality, attitudes, significant others, and demographic characteristics. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Rutgers University, 1974.

O'Connell, A. N. The decision to return to college. Role concepts, personality, attitudes, and significant others. Sex Roles, 1977, 3 (3), 229-240.

Weil, M. W. An analysis of the factors influencing married women's actual or planned work participation. American Sociological Review, 1961, 26 (1), 91-96.

Table 1

CPI Means and Levels of Significance for Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional Women

Personality Trait[a]	Life-Style		
	Traditional[b]	Neotraditional[c]	Nontraditional[d]
Dominance***	27.5***e	31.4*	34.0*
Capacity for Status	21.3*	22.1	23.4
Sociability***	23.8***e	26.8*e	28.4
Social Presence***	33.6***e	36.2	40.5*e
Self-Acceptance**	20.4***	22.3*	23.4
Sense of Well-Being	36.8	38.9	38.9
Responsibility	34.5	34.2	33.0
Socialization	39.7	38.4	38.8
Self-Control	33.1	33.6	32.5
Tolerance	24.8	25.8	25.1
Good Impression	17.4	19.9	20.1
Communality	26.0	25.6	26.1
Achievement via Conformance***	27.8***	30.3*	32.7
Achievement via Independence	23.8	23.5	23.4
Intellectual Efficiency*	40.6**	42.5	43.5
Psychological-Mindedness**	12.1***	14.0**	14.3
Flexibility	10.5	11.5	10.2
Femininity	24.7	23.6	23.1

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in one-way analysis of variance for the three life-styles.

[b] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Traditional and Nontraditional women.

[c] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Traditional and Neotraditional women.

[d] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Nontraditional and Neotraditional women.

[e] Levels of significance in Scheffe's a posteriori comparisons of means; other Scheffe comparisons are a priori.

Table 2

Life-Style: Relationship between Zero Order Correlations and Selected Partial Correlations Controlling for Influence of Parents' Life-Style

	Correlations	
	Zero Order	Partials
Influence of Parents' Life-Style	.80***	
Husband's Education	.40***	.17[a]
Husband's Preferred Life-Style	.29**	.16[a]
Husband's View of Woman's Role	.47**	.15
Self: Role Concept	.32**	.10
Social Presence	.42***	—
Sociability	.37***	—
Achievement via Conformance	.36***	—
Self-Acceptance	.25**	—

[a] $p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$